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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN - EARTHQUAKE: ONGOING NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR
RELIEF EFFORTS

REF: ISLAMABAD 16837

SUMMARY

1. With the onset of winter, relief activities are moving into a critical stage where the needs of the earthquake-affected populations must be met efficiently and quickly. The difficulty of this task has been exacerbated by the changing climatic conditions, which are significantly altering the number and locations of people moving into tented camps. Field reports indicate the need to improve the distribution network for relief commodities, the winterization of tents, and sanitation conditions in the growing camps. The USG continues to play a vital role in meeting Pakistan's requirements for earthquake relief and recovery. DOD services and excess commodities have been vital and will continue to be critically needed as winter sets in.
End Summary.

Federal Relief Commission (FRC) Update

2. In early November 2005, the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) analyzed requirements, supply, and pipeline for relief commodities to determine critical shortfalls, per reftel. This exercise drew available information from the latest FRC documents, USAID implementing partners, US Military, and the UN.

3. Unlike previous versions, the latest November 26 FRC report did not provide an update on needs, but focused on what relief communities had provided thus far. Although the report contained flaws and was incomplete, the update gave humanitarian agencies an opportunity to refine information on their contributions. The difficulty for the FRC in undertaking a gap analysis has been exacerbated by recent changing demographic and climatic conditions, which affect the number and location of people moving into spontaneous and planned tent camps and, consequently, relief requirements.

USAID Field Reports of Gaps

4. With the first snowfall in earthquake-affected areas on November 27, the requirement for detailed information on evolving needs is becoming more urgent. Although the available information is incomplete, the DART has been able to draw the following conclusions:

5. Shelter: At this time, sufficient tents appear to have been distributed, but according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), only 15 percent are winterized. Following the snowstorm on November 27, a report from the Sirin Valley indicated that many of the tents had fallen. In addition, there continues to be a shortage of large-sized tents that could be used for dormitory style arrangements. Size, quality, and winterization remain top priorities for this commodity.

¶6. Shelter Commodities Pipeline: Shelter commodities such as corrugated galvanized iron (CGI) sheets are available in Pakistan although prices in-country have increased and quality is variable. In addition, shelter commodities can be procured regionally. One NGO has opened up a supply chain of CGI sheets from Dubai and report that it takes approximately one week from order date to clearance of customs in Karachi. At an NGO coordination meeting convened on November 24 by the DART, eight organizations discussed the possibility of pooling together to submit group orders to assure a smooth flow of reasonably priced, high quality shelter materials from Dubai, India, or China.

¶7. Water and sanitation: Sanitation, particularly in camps, is an increasingly critical issue because of the onset of winter, the lack of appropriate shelter, and the resulting movement of people from the hills into spontaneous and planned tent camps. Sanitation problems are not only a matter of constructing latrines, but are strongly related to camp management and education. Effective camp management and education programs would allow organizations to site sanitation areas in the correct location, as well as teach camp residents the appropriate use of sanitation facilities.

¶8. Logistics: Several USAID-funded NGOs report increased landslides and slippery roads in the Neelum and Allai valleys because of the recent rain and snowfall. Seven roads are currently impassable at various points, totaling 35 kilometers, and the conditions will worsen as winter sets in. Regarding airlift, UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) states that present funding levels of USD 38 million have secured operation of current air assets through April (thirteen MI-8s and two MI-26 helicopters). This falls short of their USD 99 million goal, which would provide 22 MI-8s and 5 MI-26 helicopters for 6 months.

¶9. Field reports indicate that food availability is sufficient at this time, but difficulties remain in the distribution network. As winter worsens, and if there is an increase in the movement of dwellers into camps, it will be more difficult for the FRC to track the critical commodity needs of the affected population.

DOD's critical role

¶10. Although civilian air support has increased in recent weeks, DOD air assets remain the backbone and most reliable component of the Pakistani military logistics chain. With the onset of winter, already significant humanitarian needs in earthquake-affected areas of Pakistan will likely increase and logistics will be even further constrained. The adverse effects of snow and rain on relief supply distributions and the unpredictability of movements of populations will require strengthened transportation and logistics networks. Given this outlook, it is clear that DOD plays a key role in the earthquake relief operation. DOD services and excess commodities have been vital and will continue to be critically needed as winter sets in.

DART Response Actions

¶11. USAID has provided more than USD 18 million in alternative shelter activities and winterization of tents to eight NGOs, assisting an estimated 420,000 beneficiaries. Further, the DART is planning to provide an additional USD 4.5 million for critical shelter activities. To address water and sanitation problems, the DART has already provided USD 1.16 million to four NGOs for activities that will assist 97,000 beneficiaries. In addition, the DART is committing approximately USD 3 million to address water and sanitation problems in spontaneous and planned tent communities in Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) and Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). The DART is continuing to program its resources to address changing needs as they arise.

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